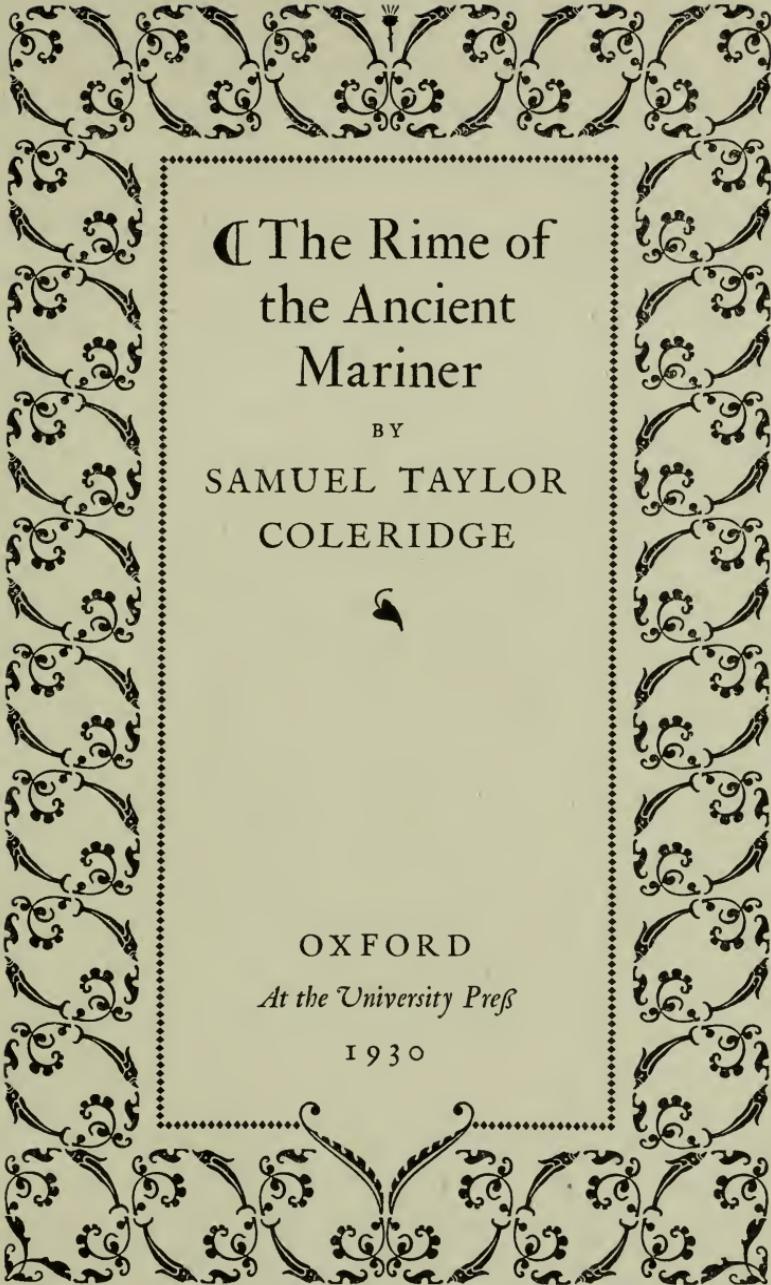




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Margaret B. Evans



☾ The Rime of
the Ancient
Mariner

BY
SAMUEL TAYLOR
COLERIDGE



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INTRODUCTION

IN 1797 Coleridge had already published a volume of verse and brought it to a second edition ; but it contained no promise of what was to come. Then the miracle happened. On the thirteenth of November of that year, at half-past four in the afternoon, the three friends—Wordsworth, his sister Dorothy, and Coleridge—set off from Nether Stowey in Somerset to walk to Watchet, on their way to the Exmoor country, intending to defray their expenses by the sale of a poem which the two men were to compose by the way. Before the first eight miles had been covered the plan of joint authorship had broken down, and Coleridge took the poem into his sole hands. He wrought at it until the following March. ‘On the twenty-third of that month’, writes Dorothy, ‘Coleridge dined with us ; he brought his ballad, *The Ancient Mariner*, finished.

We walked with him to the miner's house. A beautiful evening, very starry, the horned moon.' We feel that the stars were out with excuse, to celebrate the birth of a star.

The Ancient Mariner sets one reflecting that, after all, the men of the Middle Ages had much to say for themselves, who connected poetry with magic, and thought of Virgil as a wizard. We can ignore the time and circumstance of its birth, ignore the theorizings out of which it sprang, ignore Wordsworth and his prefaces and the taste on which they made war; and still, after more than a hundred years, *The Ancient Mariner* is the wild thing of wonder, the captured star, which Coleridge brought in his hands to Alfoxden and showed to Dorothy and William Wordsworth. Not in the whole range of English poetry—not in Shakespeare himself—has the lyrical genius of our language spoken with such a note.

A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard . . .
 Breaking the silence of the seas
 Among the farthest Hebrides.

V

Its music is as effortless as its imagery. Its words do not cumber it: exquisite words come to it, but it uses and straightway forgets them. Not Shakespeare himself, unless in snatches, so sublimated the lyrical tongue, or obtained effects so magical by the barest necessary means.

Take—

The many men, so beautiful !
And they all dead did lie.

Or—

The moving Moon went up the sky
And nowhere did abide ;
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside.

Or—

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee :
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.

Here, and throughout, from the picture of the bride entering the hall to that of the home-coming in the moon-lit harbour, every scene in the procession belongs to high romance, yet each is

conjured up with that economy of touch we are wont to call classical. We forget almost, listening to the voice, that there are such things as words.

And now 'twas like all instruments,
 Now like a lonely flute ;
 And now it is an angel's song
 That makes the heavens be mute.

If, in criticism, such an epithet be pardonable, we would call that voice seraphic ; if such a simile, we would liken it to a seraph's, musing, talking before the gate of Paradise in the dawn.

Q

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

IN SEVEN PARTS



Facile credo, plures esse Naturas invisibles quam visibiles in rerum universitate. Sed horum omnium familiam quis nobis enarrabit? et gradus et cognationes et discrimina et singulorum munera? Quid agunt? quae loca habitant? Harum rerum notitiam semper ambivit ingenium humanum, nunquam attigit. Iuvat, interea, non diffiteor, quandoque in animo, tanquam in Tabula, maioris et melioris mundi imaginem contemplari: ne mens assuefacta hodiernae vitae minutiis se contrahat nimis, et tota subsidat in pusillas cogitationes. Sed veritati interea invigilandum est, modusque servandus, ut certa ab incertis, diem a nocte, distinguamus.

T. BURNET

Archaeol. Phil., p. 68.

ARGUMENT

[1798]

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by Storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country.



PART I

IT is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
“By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp’st thou me?”

*An ancient
Mariner meeteth
three Gallants
bidden to a
wedding-feast,
and detaineth
one.*

The Bridegroom’s doors are open’d wide,
And I am next of kin ;
The guests are met, the feast is set :
May’st hear the merry din.”

He holds him with his skinny hand,
“There was a ship,” quoth he.
“Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!”
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

The Rime of the

The Wedding-Guest is spell-bound by the eye of the old seafaring man, and constrained to hear his tale.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child :
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone :
He cannot choose but hear ;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

“The ship was cheer'd, the harbour clear'd,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the light-house top.

The Mariner tells how the ship sailed southward with a good wind and fair weather, till it reached the line.

The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he !
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon —”

The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

*The Wedding-Guest
heareth the
bridal music;*

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she ;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear ;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

*but the Mariner
continueth his
tale.*

“ And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong :
He struck with his o’ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

*The ship drawn
by a storm toward
the south pole.*

The Rime of the

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
 As who pursued with yell and blow
 Still treads the shadow of his foe,
 And forward bends his head,
 The ship drove fast, loud roar'd the blast,
 And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
 And it grew wonderous cold :
 And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
 As green as emerald.

*The land of ice,
 and of fearful
 sounds, where no
 living thing was
 to be seen.*

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
 Did send a dismal sheen :
 Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
 The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
 The ice was all around :
 It cracked and growled, and roar'd and howl'd,
 Like noises in a swound !

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came ;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

Till a great sea-bird, called the Albatross, came through the snow-fog, and was received with great joy and hospitality.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit ;
The helmsman steer'd us through !

And a good south wind sprung up behind ;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo !

And lo! the Albatross proveth a bird of good omen, and followeth the ship as it returned northward through fog and floating ice.

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perch'd for vespers nine ;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white Moon-shine."

*The ancient
Mariner
inhospitably
killeth the
pious bird of
good omen.*

“God save thee, ancient Mariner !

From the fiends, that plague thee thus !—

Why look'st thou so?” — “With my cross-bow

I shot the ALBATROSS.”





PART II

THE Sun now rose upon the right :
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo !

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe :
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
'Ah wretch!' said they, 'the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow !'

*His shipmates
cry out against
the ancient
Mariner, for
killing the bird
of good luck.*

*But when the
fog cleared off,
they justify the
same, and thus
make themselves
accomplices in
the crime.*

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist :
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.

'Twas right,' said they, 'such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.'

*The fair breeze
continues ; the
ship enters the
Pacific Ocean
and sails north-
ward, even till it
reaches the Line.*

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free ;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

*The ship hath
been suddenly
becalmed.*

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be ;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea !

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion ;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink ;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

*And the
Albatross
begins to
be avenged.*

The very deep did rot : O Christ !
That ever this should be !
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night ;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

*A spirit had fol-
lowed them ; one
of the invisible
inhabitants of
this planet,
neither departed
souls nor angels ;
concerning whom
the learned Jew,
Josephus, and the
Platonic Con-
stantinopolitan,
Michael Psellus,
may be consulted.*

*They are very
numerous, and
there is no climate
or element without
one or more.*

*The shipmates, in
their sore distress,
would fain throw
the whole guilt
on the ancient
Mariner: in sign
whereof they hang
the dead sea-bird
round his neck.*

And some in dreams assuréd were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so ;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was wither'd at the root ;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been chok'd with soot.

Ah ! well a-day ! what evil looks
Had I from old and young !
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.





PART III

THERE passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time ! a weary time !
How glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

*The ancient
Mariner be-
holdeth a sign
in the element
afar off.*

At first it seem'd a little speck,
And then it seem'd a mist ;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist !
And still it near'd and near'd :
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tack'd and veer'd.

The Rime of the

*At its nearer
approach, it
seemeth him to
be a ship; and at
a dear ransom
he freeth his
speech from the
bonds of thirst.*

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail ;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood !
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail ! a sail !

A flash of joy;

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call :
Gramercy ! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

*And horror
follows.
For can it be a
ship that comes
onward without
wind or tide ?*

See ! see ! (I cried) she tacks no more !
Hither to work us weal ;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel !

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well nigh done !
Almost upon the western wave

Rested the broad bright Sun ;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace !)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peer'd
With broad and burning face.

*It seemeth him
but the skeleton
of a ship.*

*And its ribs are
seen as bars on
the face of the
setting Sun.*

Alas ! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears !
Are those *her* sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres ?

Are those *her* ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate ?
And is that Woman all her crew ?
Is that a DEATH ? and are there two ?
Is DEATH that woman's mate ?

*The spectre-
woman and
her death-mate,
and no other
on board the
skeleton-ship.*

The Rime of the

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
 Her locks were yellow as gold :
 Her skin was as white as leprosy,
 The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
 Who thicks man's blood with cold.

*Like vessel,
 like crew !*

*DEATH, and
 LIFE-IN-DEATH
 have dived for
 the ship's crew,
 and she (the
 latter) winneth
 the ancient
 Mariner.*

The naked hulk alongside came,
 And the twain were casting dice ;
 'The game is done! I've won, I've won !'
 Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

*No twilight
 within the
 courts of the
 Sun.*

The Sun's rim dips ; the stars rush out :
 At one stride comes the dark ;
 With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
 Off shot the spectre-bark.

We listen'd and look'd sideways up !
 Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
 My life-blood seem'd to sip !
 The stars were dim, and thick the night,
 The steersman's face by his lamp gleam'd white ;

From the sails the dews did drip—
Till clombe above the eastern bar
The hornéd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

*At the rising
of the Moon,*

One after one, by the star-dogg'd Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turn'd his face with a ghastly pang,
And curs'd me with his eye.

*One after
another,*

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

*His shipmates
drop down
dead ;*

The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe !
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whiz of my CROSS-BOW ! ”

*But Life-in-
Death begins
her work on
the ancient
Mariner.*





PART IV

The Wedding-Guest feareth that a Spirit is talking to him;

I FEAR thee, ancient Mariner !

I fear thy skinny hand !

And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown.”—

But the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance.

“ Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest !

This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,

Alone on a wide wide sea !

And never a saint took pity on

My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful !

And they all dead did lie :

He despiseth the creatures of the calm,

And a thousand thousand slimy things

Liv'd on ; and so did I.

I look'd upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away ;
I look'd upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

*And envieth
that they should
live, and so
many lie dead.*

I look'd to Heaven, and tried to pray ;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat ;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they :
The look with which they look'd on me
Had never pass'd away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell

A spirit from on high ;

But oh ! more horrible than that

Is the curse in a dead man's eye !

Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,

And yet I could not die.

*But the curse
liveth for him
in the eye of
the dead men.*

The moving Moon went up the sky,

And no where did abide :

Softly she was going up,

And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemock'd the sultry main,

Like April hoar-frost spread ;

But where the ship's huge shadow lay,

The charmed water burnt alway

A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,

I watch'd the water-snakes :

They moved in tracks of shining white,

And when they reared, the elfish light

Fell off in hoary flakes.

*In his loneliness
and fixedness he
yearneth towards
the journeying
Moon, and the
stars that still
sojourn, yet still
move onward ;
and every where
the blue sky
belongs to them,
and is their
appointed rest,
and their native
country and their
own natural
homes, which
they enter unan-
nounced, as lords
that are certainly
expected and yet
there is a silent joy
at their arrival.*

*By the light of the
Moon he beholdeth
God's creatures of
the great calm.*

Within the shadow of the ship
I watch'd their rich attire :
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam ; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things ! no tongue
Their beauty might declare :
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware :
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

*Their beauty and
their happiness.*

*He blesseth them
in his heart.*

The self same moment I could pray ;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

*The spell begins
to break.*





PART V

OH SLEEP ! it is a gentle thing,
Belov'd from pole to pole !
To Mary Queen the praise be given !
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

*By grace of the
holy Mother,
the ancient
Mariner is
refreshed with
rain.*

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew ;
And when I awoke, it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank ;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs :
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind :
It did not come anear ;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

*He heareth
sounds and seeth
strange sights
and commotions
in the sky and
the element.*

The upper air burst into life !
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about !
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge ;
And the rain pour'd down from one black cloud ;
The Moon was at its edge.

The Rime of the

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side :
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on !
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

*The bodies of
the ship's crew
are inspirited,
and the ship
moves on ;*

They groan'd, they stirr'd, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes ;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on ;
Yet never a breeze up-blew ;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do ;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee :
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me."

" I fear thee, ancient Mariner ! "
" Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest !
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest :

*But not by the
souls of the men,
nor by dæmons of
earth or middle
air, but by a
blessed troop of
angelic spirits,
sent down by the
invocation of the
guardian saint.*

For when it dawned—they dropped their arms,
And clustered round the mast ;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun ;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

The Rime of the

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing ;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seem'd to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning !

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute ;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased ; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe :
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid : and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

*The lonesome
Spirit from the
south pole carries
on the ship as
far as the Line,
in obedience to
the angelic troop,
but still
requireth
vengeance.*

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean :
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound :
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swoond.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare ;
But ere my living life returned,

*The Polar
Spirit's fellow-
demons, the
invisible in-
habitants of
the element,
take part in
his wrong ;
and two of them
relate, one to
the other, that
penance long
and heavy for
the ancient
Mariner hath
been accorded
to the Polar
Spirit, who
returneth
southward.*

I heard, and in my soul discerned

TWO VOICES in the air.

‘ Is it he ? ’ quoth one, ‘ is this the man ?

By Him who died on cross,

With his cruel bow he laid full low

The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself

In the land of mist and snow,

He loved the bird that loved the man

Who shot him with his bow.’

The other was a softer voice,

As soft as honey-dew :

Quoth he, ‘ The man hath penance done,

And penance more will do.’





PART VI

First Voice

BUT tell me, tell me ! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast ?
What is the OCEAN doing ?

Second Voice

Still as a slave before his lord,
The OCEAN hath no blast ;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go ;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see ! how graciously
She looketh down on him.

*The Rime of the**First Voice*

*The Mariner
hath been cast
into a trance;
for the angelic
power causeth the
vessel to drive
northward faster
than human life
could endure.*

But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind ?

Second Voice

The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly ! more high, more high !
Or we shall be belated :
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

*The super-
natural motion
is retarded ; the
Mariner awakes,
and his penance
begins anew.*

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather :
'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high ;
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter :
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away :
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapt : once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

*The curse is
finally expiated,*

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turn'd round, walks on,
And turns no more his head ;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made :
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

The Rime of the

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too :
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

*And the ancient
Mariner
beholdeth his
native country.*

Oh ! dream of joy ! is this indeed
The light-house top I see ?
Is this the hill ? is this the kirk ?
Is this mine own countree ?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God !
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn !

And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock :
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

*The angelic
spirits leave the
dead bodies,*

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were :
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ ! what saw I there !

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood !
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

*And appear in
their own forms
of light.*

This seraph-band, each waved his hand :
It was a heavenly sight !
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light ;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand :
No voice did they impart—
No voice ; but oh ! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer ;
My head was turn'd perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast :
Dear Lord in Heaven ! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice :
It is the Hermit good !
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrive my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.





PART VII

*The Hermit of
the Wood,*

THIS Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears !
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump :
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

*Approacheth the
ship with wonder.*

The Skiff-boat near'd : I heard them talk,
'Why, this is strange, I trow !
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now ?'

‘Strange, by my faith!’ the Hermit said—
‘And they answered not our cheer!
The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf’s young.’

‘Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared’—‘Push on, push on!’
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred:
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

The ship suddenly sinketh.

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread :
It reach'd the ship, it split the bay ;
The ship went down like lead.

*The ancient
Mariner is
saved in the
Pilot's boat.*

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drown'd
My body lay afloat ;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round ;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit ;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars : the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
' Ha ! ha ! ' quoth he, ' full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.'

And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land !
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

' O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man ! '
The Hermit cross'd his brow.
' Say quick,' quoth he, ' I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou ? '

*The ancient
Mariner earnest-
ly entreateth the
Hermit to
shrieve him ;
and the penance
of life falls on
him.*

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woeful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale ;
And then it left me free.

And ever and anon throughout his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land ;

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns :
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land ;
I have strange power of speech ;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me :
To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door !
The wedding-guests are there :
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are :
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer !

O Wedding-Guest ! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea :
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seeméd there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends
And youths and maidens gay!

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

*And to teach,
by his own
example, love
and reverence
to all things
that God made
and loveth.*

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.”

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone : and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn :
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.



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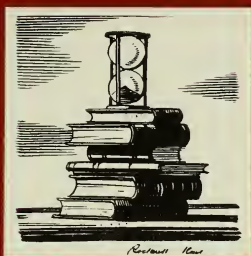
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